

Mental Health Futures Meetings

- October 19, Sub Acute & Secure Residential work group, 9-11 a.m., Cyprian Learning Center, Waterbury.
- October 21, Care Management work group, 9-11 a.m., Conference Room 2, Central Vermont Hospital, Berlin.

Work Group To Discuss In-patient Notice Practice

The Futures Initiative's care management work group will take up the issue of hospitals' requiring voluntary psychiatric inpatients to sign admission agreements to give three or four day's notice before leaving the hospital without a physician discharge order. Current practice varies widely among hospitals across the state. The goal of the work group will be to make recommendations regarding the merits of the practice, the need for uniformity of the practice across the system, and the need for oversight to prevent potential abuse.

Current state law allows hospitals to require that voluntary inpatients agree to give notice, and requires that such agreements be executed on a standard form provided by the Department of Health. The Department distributed such forms to the hospitals in August, with an explanation that they must be used if the hospital has a notice requirement. The Department has made no recommendation regarding the practice itself.

Inpatient Architect Selection Process To Begin

The Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS) is proceeding with a bid process to hire an architectural firm to do preliminary schematic designs for the Futures Initiative's inpatient replacement service at a primary site, with one or two increased inpatient capacities at other sites. This preliminary work includes the development of a plan of space needs and size, an evaluation of potential sites to determine their appropriateness, production of initial schematic designs, and development of a preliminary budget for presentation to the Legislature. The Legislature's Mental Health Legislative Oversight Committee has approved the release of funds for this purpose.

With the cooperation of Agency Deputy Secretary Cindy LaWare and BGS Commissioner Tasha Wallis, the Health Department team participating in the selection process will include a stakeholder representative and an expert on psychiatric inpatient facilities.

BGS has a customary bid process for all state-sponsored building projects that involves:

- a request for proposals targeted to interested architectural firms with relevant experience,
- a selection committee,
- a final decision by the Commissioner of BGS.

In keeping with standard practice, the selection committee will be made up of eight voting members, all state employees. The role of the committee will be to make a recommendation to Commissioner Wallis, who will make the final decision. Three of the members will be Health Department staff (Paul Blake, Beth Tanzman and Dave Cote), and five will be from BGS. The Health Department team will also include two non-voting advisors who will fully participate in the review process. They will attend all meetings, receive and review all documents, plans and correspondence, and participate in the discussions and committee deliberations. The team has arranged to have Anne Donahue serve as the Department's stakeholder advisor; selection of a second advisor, with psychiatric inpatient facility expertise, is underway.

Input Sought: Criteria for Selecting an Architect for Inpatient Facility

In cooperation with BGS, the Futures Initiative is seeking feedback from the broad community of stakeholders on the selection criteria for choosing an architectural firm for a new inpatient psychiatric facility. Your input can help strengthen the RFP and inform the selection committee. The criteria that BGS uses for selecting are:

- **Experience:** Has firm had experience with large sites. Has the firm been in business for a reasonable period of time? Has the firm had similar projects?
- **Strength of Design Team:** Does the team have a solid understanding of the technical aspects of the project? Has the team worked together before? Can this team produce drawings and documents within the desired time frame? Is the experience of the team members appropriate? Who will represent the consultants in the field?
- **Ability to meet the tight schedule:** Does the firm have sufficient staff and technical capability to produce program documents, site evaluations, and schematic designs within the allotted time frame? Is the firm already committed to significant projects, which may interfere with production on this project? What has been the firm's track record for maintaining A&E schedules?
- **Fee Structure:** Is the aggregate fee reasonable yet competitive; is the hourly rate structure competitive? Are the various rates for specific tasks reasonable, complete and clear? The proposer should indicate how additional tasks could be handled beyond those proposed initially perhaps with unit prices. The proposer should also indicate what reimbursable expenses are and what rates would apply to those expenses.

Stakeholders are invited to consider these criteria and help us to operationalize these in a manner that is consistent with the Futures project. For instance, under Criterion 1: Experience, we will be looking for a firm that has demonstrated experience working with stakeholders in a design process.

Please e-mail your suggestions to Beth Tanzman at btanzman@vdh.state.vt.us **by the end of the day on Tuesday, October 18.** Tanzman will consolidate the input and communicate it directly to BGS.

Department Recruiting for Adult Director, Futures Policy Positions

Among the positions for which the Health Department is actively recruiting:

- Adult Mental Health Operations Director, to replace Beth Tanzman.
- Senior Policy Developer to work on the Mental Health Futures Initiative. This position will work closely with the mental health stakeholder community to synthesize feedback and develop policy recommendations. In addition, this person will assist in the implementation of major project milestones including program development and the CON process.

Department of Corrections Negotiating for Mental Health Care

Corrections Commissioner Robert Hofmann has announced that his department has entered into contract negotiations with Mental Health Management (MHM) Correctional Services, Inc., to provide mental health services to incarcerated Vermonters.

“We received five proposals from two in-state and three out-of-state companies”, said Hofmann. “A 10-member review panel with representatives from the Department of Corrections and the Agency of Human Services ranked the proposals after carefully reviewing each one, hearing oral presentations and asking detailed questions of each bidder.”

MHM Correctional Services, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of MHM Services, was founded in 1981 and is the largest provider of correctional mental health services in the United States, now serving over 180,000 inmates in nine states. MHM corporate offices are located in Vienna, Virginia.

There are currently over 500 inmates on the mental health roster in Vermont prisons. Though only a small number of inmates have a major mental illness, a substantial number receive psychotropic medications or meet regularly with a clinician.

If the negotiations with MHM, Inc., are successful, implementation activities would begin in mid-December. The new contract is slated to take effect in mid-February, 2006.

Legislative Committee To Tour Hospital

The Legislature’s Mental Health Oversight Committee meets on October 26, 10 a.m.-noon, in the large conference room, Department of Economic Services, Waterbury State Office Complex. The committee plans to tour Vermont State Hospital at the beginning of their meeting.

VSH Census

The Vermont State Hospital census has been relatively low all week, reaching 42 at midnight on Tuesday night. The census was 46 as of midnight Thursday night. The average census for the past 45 days was 47.5.

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